

The University of Chicago

CADWALADER, ARTHUR, AND BRUTUS
IN THE WIGMORE MANUSCRIPT

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

1939

By
MARY E. GIFFIN

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CORRIGENDA

The following textual corrections should be noted: p. 109, l. 4, *for daughter read granddaughter*; p. 112, l. 9, *for duke read earl*; p. 113, l. 22, *for duke read earl*; p. 114, l. 25, *for Worchestershire read Worcestershire*; p. 117, l. 27, *for Eilert read Eilhart*; p. 117, l. 29, *for Strassbourg read Strassburg*.



CADWALADER, ARTHUR, AND BRUTUS IN THE WIGMORE MANUSCRIPT

By MARY E. GIFFIN

SCHOLARLY investigations have ably shown that the Norman kings of England took advantage of the legends of early Britain and the sanctity of Edward the Confessor to add to their prestige. Henry I, who had strengthened his position by marrying a daughter of Edward the Confessor, made it clear that Edward had prophesied glorious things for Prince William, who, however, did not live to realize them.¹ The canonization of Edward the Confessor and the powers of healing which came to be associated with his sanctity were highly advantageous.² Geoffrey of Monmouth supplied for English sovereigns a King Arthur whose eminence and wide conquests reflected glory upon his successors comparable to that shed upon French kings by Charlemagne.³ Geoffrey also provided the prophecies of Merlin, which were revised and interpreted again and again to fit new political conditions.⁴ From the prophecies, Henry I came to be referred to as the 'lion of righteousness,'⁵ and from them also arose the tradition that the ancient British line would eventually be restored. According to Geoffrey, Arthur was a world conqueror, whose liegemen spiritual and temporal corresponded closely to those from whom Henry I claimed allegiance.⁶ In the thirteenth century, Edward I, having conquered Wales, sought to establish his claim to Scotland by the use of evidence drawn from Geoffrey.⁷

In Wales the legends of the glory of ancient Britain had a special significance. According to prophecy, Arthur was believed to be, not dead, but merely waiting an auspicious occasion to return and free Britain from foreign bondage.⁸ The Welsh princes, therefore, boasted direct descent from Arthur, whom the Norman kings regarded merely as a glorious predecessor. Moreover, Brutus, of the Trojan line, who killed the giants and settled in Britain, was of still greater antiquity, being the ancestor of Arthur. Another Welsh prince, a descendent of Arthur, and the last true king of Britain, Cadwalader, was also the subject of prophecies and hopes for deliverance from the Norman yoke.⁹

It has been shown by scholars that Henry VII, making the most of a slender claim to royal prestige, traced his descent from Brutus in five score degrees, and was hailed by the Welsh as their king, the Bull of Mona, the resurrected Arthur come at last to rule over all Britain.¹⁰ In his coronation procession the red dragon of Cadwalader was borne by members of great families.¹¹ The new sovereign was

¹ Gordon H. Gerould, 'King Arthur and Politics,' *SPECULUM*, II (1927), 44.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 42-44. ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 49.

⁴ A. E. Parsons, 'The Trojan Legend in England,' *MLR*, XXIV (1929), 263-264, 397-398.

⁵ R. L. Poole, *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning* (2nd edition revised, N. Y.: Macmillan, 1920), p. 177 and note. ⁶ Parsons, p. 259.

⁷ Sir Edmund Chambers, *Arthur of Britain* (London: Sidgwick, 1927), p. 128.

⁸ Charles B. Millican, *Spenser and the Table Round* (Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, VIII; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), p. 9 and note, p. 149. ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-16, 151. Cf. E. A. Greenlaw, *Studies on Spenser's Historical Allegory* (Johns Hopkins Monographs in Literary History, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), p. 7. ¹¹ Millican, p. 15.

praised in poetry as a tall pillar from Brutus and Ascanius, a prince of the noble line of Troy and Troilus, who was destined to restore the government of Cadwalader.¹ When a young prince was born at Winchester, where the Round Table was preserved, he was named Arthur, and all England rejoiced, while foreign nations trembled at his name.² When he was twelve years old, the young prince was received at Coventry by a pageant representing King Arthur and the Nine Worthies, King Arthur making the speech of welcome.³ Prince Arthur's death, however, caused Arthurian pageantry to be given up for a time. Henry, duke of York was created Prince of Wales, and all that could be done for him by way of genealogy was accomplished by Thomas Gardiner, a monk of Westminster. The pedigree showed his descent from Cadwalader, and placed him properly in the royal line.⁴ Princess Margaret's wedding to James IV of Scotland in 1503 seems to have provided the next opportunity for Arthurian pageantry, and King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table were prominent in the festivities.⁵ In 1517 the Round Table at Winchester was decorated with the Tudor double rose and the colors white and green, and repaired for display.⁶ The visit of Francis I to England in 1520 was made spectacular by a pageant of the Nine Worthies and the declaration by Henry VIII that the Order of the Garter was the badge and first order of King Arthur.⁷ Charles V, on a visit to England in 1522, was entertained by a pageant in which Arthur was a prominent character, and the Round Table was shown as one of the objects of chivalry cherished in England.⁸ The political result of this dramatization of Welsh ancestry was realized in 1536 by the annexation of Wales to England by act of Parliament. From this time the Arthurian antiquarian movement became the basis for a considerable body of history and literature. Leland, Camden, Drayton, and Spenser defended Trojan and Arthurian stories against Polydore Vergil, who dared to question them, and wrote of the house of Tudor as the restoration of the true British line.⁹

Heretofore no evidence has been brought forward to show the use of legend for political purposes between the reign of Edward I and that of Henry VII except as the basis for the claims of Welsh chieftains. Within this period Arthur became an ancestor, rather than a predecessor, and there were added to the royal line Cadwalader and Brutus. It has been supposed that the Tudors, whose Welsh lineage would have made them thoroughly conversant with all the possibilities of the British tradition, were the first to realize the political value of Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus as ancestors. Pageantry in which Arthurian tradition was made to contribute to royal prestige was introduced as early as Edward I, and later became an important part of court entertainments and of an antiquarian movement under the Tudors.

A recent study of the Wigmore Ms. at the University of Chicago has brought to light the significance of several facts which have formerly stood unrelated and unexplained in the two bodies of evidence brought forward to show the use of

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

² Greenlaw, p. 85.

³ Millican, p. 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷ Greenlaw, p. 40. Millican, p. 23, and note.

⁸ Millican, pp. 23-24, and notes.

⁹ Millican, pp. 7, 25, 28, 31, 34, 36, 37. Greenlaw, pp. 30, 85.

legend for political purposes.¹ The manuscript, which was in private possession until the University of Chicago purchased it in 1929, contains a *Brut*, a genealogy of the English kings, and a genealogy of the Mortimer family, and was apparently prepared by the Mortimers to advance their claim to the throne in the fourteenth century. It is therefore a document of considerable interest for the struggle between the Duke of Lancaster and the Mortimer heirs for the crown between 1376, when the death of the Black Prince brought the question of succession into prominence, and 1399, when Henry, earl of Derby, became king.

In the Wigmore Ms., we have evidence that legends of early Britain were used by the Mortimer family, both in pageantry and genealogy. The emphasis upon Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus as ancestors appears effectively in the elaborate illumination and rubrication of fols 51^v–52^r. Here the marriage of Ralph de Mortimer, baron of Wigmore, to Gwladusa, daughter of Lewelin ap Ierwerth, Prince of Wales, in 1228, or soon after, is shown to be of great importance to the family of Mortimer, for a beautifully rubricated genealogy of Gwladusa makes clear her descent from Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus. If Roger de Mortimer, fourth earl of March, declared heir to the throne by Parliament in 1385, had not died in Ireland in 1398, but had come to the throne as the successor of Richard II, the same things could have been said of him that were later said of Henry VII. Moreover, the Mortimer family seems to have been aware of all the forms in which legends might be made useful. The Wigmore Ms, therefore, links the two bodies of evidence already assembled, and shows that the use of legends for political purposes was continuous in England from the twelfth to the sixteenth century.

Some time before the Mortimers were in a position to claim the throne, they used Arthurian tradition to heighten their dignity and prestige. The entries of fol. 53^v, under the arms of Roger de Mortimer, sixth baron of Wigmore, contain an account of an entertainment in which Arthurian legend plays an important part. When Edward I knighted three sons of Roger de Mortimer at Kenilworth in 1279, the Baron of Wigmore entertained one hundred knights and one hundred ladies for three days with a tournament and Round Table. During the feasting, a present was received from the Queen of Navarre, consisting of wooden vessels bound with gilt hoops and wax, which seemed to contain wine. When opened, however, they were discovered to be filled with gold. The flasks were for a long time afterward exhibited at Wigmore Abbey. On the fourth day of the festivities Roger de Mortimer transported his guests, at his own expense, to Warwick.

The entries on fol. 53^v are verifiable for the most part by other documents, and may be relied upon as correct.² They are all written by the same hand, and

¹ Mary E. Giffin, 'The Wigmore Manuscript and the Mortimer Family' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1939).

² The historical events of the time are those of the Welsh wars. The wardship of Roger de Mortimer under Henry III is accurately related, and the estimate of fifteen years between his livery and the civil wars is correct. See R. W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire* (London: Smith, 1854–60),

apparently at the same time. One detail, however, was imperfectly understood by the scribe. He thought the gift of gold had come from abroad, and explains the circumstance by saying that the tournament had been announced by a herald abroad, and that the queen sent the gift to honour the baron of Wigmore, whom she greatly admired. He says also that Mortimer, in return, added a carbuncle to his arms in her honour.

The actual circumstances surrounding the tournament serve to make clear, not only this detail, but the motives of Mortimer in giving the entertainment. Edmund, duke of Lancaster, the younger brother of Edward I,¹ with whom Mortimer had been closely associated before 1279, made his home at Kenilworth. In 1275 he had married Blanche, queen of Navarre, and it was therefore in her own home that she presented Mortimer with the elaborate gift, upon the occasion of the tournament. Edward I, who was a grandson of the Provençal poet Count Raymond Berengar IV, would doubtless have been interested in the Round Table legend.² He was particularly fond of romances; from his manuscripts Rustician of Pisa made his well-known abridgement of the cycle of Arthurian romances.³

The tournament at Kenilworth marks an important step in the rise of the Mortimer family. By his marriage with Matilda de Breuse in 1247, Roger de Mortimer had acquired the lordship of Radnor and large estates in Carmarthen-shire and elsewhere in Wales, in England, and in Ireland,⁴ and he possessed ample means to entertain in the lavish fashion described in the Wigmore Ms. He had long been in high favor, both with Edward I and with his father, Henry III. From 1257 he had been of great service to Henry III in Wales, as an ambassador treating with the enemy.⁵ He had avoided adroitly the traps set for him by Montfort after the imprisonment of the king and Prince Edward,⁶ and had been the means of Edward's escape in 1265. With the freedom of the prince came the turn in the warfare, and royal successes followed. Mortimer's part in the victory of Evesham was recognized by liberal royal gifts of land.⁷ By the siege of Kenilworth, the final battle of the wars, Montfort was finally defeated. Credit for the successful outcome of the siege belonged equally to Mortimer and the younger prince, Edmund, who commanded a division of the royal forces. As a reward, Edmund received the castle of Kenilworth, and the tournament at which Mortimer was host was held there. In view of the reliance of Henry III and Edward I

IV, 217. Two chronicles mention the Round Table tournament. Rishanger gives the number of guests (*Willelmi Rishanger, quondam monachi S. Albani, et quorundam anonymorum, chronica et annales*, [ed. Henry Thomas Riley, Rolls Series; London: Longman, etc., 1865], pp. 94-95). The chronicle of Osney comments on the profuse expense of the tournament and Round Table (*Annales monastici* [ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series; London: Longman, etc., 1864-69], IV, 281-282).

¹ The maker of the royal genealogy in the Wigmore Ms apparently did not know of the intimacy between Mortimer and Edmund, or the fact would have been entered in the genealogies of the Mortimers and the kings. One of the arguments in the controversy over the succession between Lancaster and Mortimer was that of the priority of Edmund among the sons of Henry III. For an account of the controversy see 'The Wigmore Ms and the Mortimer Family,' pp. 111-112, 120.

² T. F. Tout, *Edward the First* (London: Macmillan, 1893), p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴ Eyton, IV, 217.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 283-284; IV, 219-220.

⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 220-221.

⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 40, 206, 207; IV, 221-222.

upon Mortimer,¹ and of the close association of Prince Edmund and Mortimer, the Round Table tournament may have been in part a celebration of the victory at Kenilworth, and therefore held upon the scene of the battle.

The power of Mortimer in his vast estates was almost equal to that of the king. In his court of Cleobury alone, as Eyton has shown, Mortimer attracted the suits of various manors; his bailiffs held a great tourn before that of the sheriff was held; they decided pleas of land with or without the king's writ. Mortimer claimed to have extract and return of all writs and held pleas of forbidden distress; he had a gallows at Cleobury; he held pleas as to the assize of bread and beer.² From 1266 until his death in 1282, Roger de Mortimer's efforts were concentrated upon the augmentation of his wealth and power.³

His usefulness to the royal cause lay in the fact that through his mother, Gwladusa, daughter of Lewelin ap Ierwerth, he inherited a true title to the principality of North Wales. There can be no doubt that Edward I recognized Mortimer's ambition, and made use of it in the royal cause. He made Mortimer guardian of the two young Welsh princes, Lewelin and Gruffydd, the sons of Madog ap Gruffydd, prince of North Wales, who died in 1277. When the two princes were drowned in the river Dee in 1281, it was said that the king had commanded it, and that Mortimer had been responsible for the deed. Shortly after the death of the princes, Edward I conferred upon Mortimer the Castle of Chirk.⁴ The formidable rival of Mortimer in South Wales was Lewelin, whom Edmund de Mortimer, Roger's son, with the help of Edmund, duke of Lancaster, defeated in 1282, sending his head in triumph to London. There can be no doubt that Roger de Mortimer, and his son, Edmund, sought supremacy in Wales, and that this ambition provided the king with a useful ally in the west. The tournament and Round Table of 1279 came before the triumph over all the other princes descended from Arthur. It is possible that Roger de Mortimer used Arthurian legend to point out what might be done for England by a prince of the Welsh blood who was also loyal to the king.

With the final destruction of the Welsh princes, Edward I may have seen some danger in the supremacy of Mortimer. He took occasion, at the tournament at Nevin in Carnarvonshire in 1284, to set up a Round Table of his own, and to make much of newly discovered relics of ancient kings. One of these, the crown of Arthur, was presented to Edward I ceremoniously at that time.⁵ Further evidence of the king's conscious attempt to win the Welsh is seen in the naming of the young prince born during the wars 'Edward of Carnarvon,' and in the fact

¹ *Ibid.*, iv, 219-222. Between Evesham and the Kenilworth tournament they were most dependent upon him and in return for his aid, showed him every favor. He was one of the trustees of Prince Edward's estates during the prince's absence in Palestine from 1270 until after the death of Henry III. Ralph de Mortimer, son and heir of Roger, became sheriff of Shropshire in 1273, his term of office being cut short by his death, soon after (*ibid.*, iii, 41). ² *Ibid.*, iv, 222-223.

³ There is considerable evidence of unrest under unjust administration during the expansion of Mortimer power. Eyton has cited a number of cases of objections to Mortimer's annexation of lands and privileges (*ibid.*, i, 157, 226, 241, 310; ii, 228, 282; iv, 222-223).

⁴ J. Y. W. Lloyd, *The History of the Princes, the Lords Marcher, and the Ancient Nobility of Powys Fadog* (London: T. Richards, 1881-1887), i, 175-178. ⁵ Tout, p. 113.

that the prince had a Welsh nurse, and later, Welsh attendants.¹ The policy of Edward I was far-sighted. Wales was annexed to the crown, but not to England, and the machinery of government in Wales rested in the hands of the lords marcher. Edmund de Mortimer, like his father, assumed the responsibility of keeping Wales in subjection. The king, by remaining aloof, retained his popularity with the Welsh and avoided the difficulties of administering Welsh affairs.

The shrewd policy of Edward I in governing Wales, and his receiving the crown of Arthur at Nevin, indicate that the king regarded the preempting of Arthurian legend as politically expedient. In this he seems to have differed markedly from Henry II, who in the latter part of the twelfth century, found the 'hope of Britain' embarrassing and sought to minimize Arthur's greatness. Professor Tatlock has shown that the belief in Arthur's return encouraged resistance to Norman power both in Wales and in Brittany, and that Stephen of Rouen deliberately minimized the glory of Arthur in order to heighten the achievement of Henry II.² Professor Nitze has also pointed out that Henry II was apparently eager to destroy the hope of Arthur's return, and was assisted by the monks of Glastonbury and several chroniclers, who made it clear that the exhumation of Arthur's bones implied that he had died and had been buried as other men.³ A century later, with the Welsh princes out of the way, and Mortimer occupied with the problems of governing Wales, Edward I realized that it would be advantageous to attach to the crown whatever glory Arthurian legend might offer.

In 1279 the Round Table legend was at least one hundred years old in its literary form, having been related by Wace for the court of Henry II and Eleanor.⁴ Layamon, who added somewhat to Wace's version of the legend,⁵ had written at Lower Arnley, or Arley, in Worchestershire, within the manor which came to Mortimer as a gift of the king in 1276.⁶ Is it possible that the ownership of the land on which Layamon's story of the Round Table was written had any connection with Mortimer's use of the device in a tournament, three years after he acquired the land?

For some time it was the generally received opinion that Layamon drew to a large extent upon local tradition in the writing of the *Brut*.⁷ In recent years, however, this view has been altered by evidence which points to the fact that the Round Table was an early Christian conception associated with the Last Supper, and that the transference of the Round Table to Arthur and his court occurred when poets sought to lift Arthur to the eminence of Charlemagne, whose twelve peers were a reflection and imitation of the twelve apostles.⁸ According to the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

² J. S. P. Tatlock, 'Geoffrey and King Arthur in "Normannicus Draco,"' *Mod. Phil.*, xxxi (1933), 1-18, 115-125.

³ W. A. Nitze, 'The Exhumation of King Arthur at Glastonbury,' *SPECULUM*, ix (1935), 355-361.

⁴ Wace, *Roman de Brut* (ed. Le Roux de Lincy, Rouen: Edouard Frère, 1836-1838), vs. 9994, ff., and 10555, 13675, ff.

⁵ Layamon, *Brut* (ed. Sir Frederick Madden; London: Society of Antiquaries, 1847), vs. 27736, ff.

⁶ *Victoria County History of Worcester*, III, 6. Cf. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edward I, 1272-1281*, p. 145.

⁷ See A. C. L. Brown, 'Welsh Tradition in Layamon's *Brut*,' *Mod. Phil.*, I (1903), 95-103.

⁸ Laura H. Loomis, 'Arthur's Round Table,' *PMLA*, xli (1926), 771-784, and 'The Round Table Again,' *MLN*, xliiv (1929), 511-519.

opinion now generally held, the legends preceding Layamon were probably Christian tradition and Layamon's story of Arthur's quelling a quarrel among his knights and setting up a Round Table with magic properties to assure amity came from Breton, not Welsh, tradition.¹ Whatever its origin, the story was entirely in harmony with Mortimer's relationship with the royal family, and may have given him an admirable means of showing his loyalty, together with that of his fellow knights, to his king. The emphasis upon the equality of the knights surrounding the table appears to have been a perfect device for a powerful baron to use in entertaining his king and his peers, many of whom must have had ambitions commensurate with his own.

At the same time, the device of the Round Table may have served to indicate the importance of Mortimer, who, through his mother, Gwladusa, princess of Wales, traced his descent from Arthur. The baron of Wigmore had ample opportunity to know much about Arthur and his eminence. A survey of lands held by him at the time of the tournament shows that many sites of Arthurian legend lay within his territory or near it. Moreover, the Welsh wars, in which Mortimer was closely associated with Edmund, his host at Kenilworth, were fought on land rich in Arthurian legends. It may be that Mortimer, while selecting a device recognized by the king and Edmund as having a special connection with the Welsh wars and therefore appropriate to the entertainment at Kenilworth, had also in mind the fact that as a descendent of Arthur, his use of the Round Table was particularly appropriate.

Caerleon, on the river Usk, in what is now Monmouthshire, did not become a Mortimer possession until the fourteenth century, but was in 1279, in the possession of Edmund, duke of Lancaster. It lay to the south of the Mortimer lordship of Brecon. The ancient city of legends in which Arthur was supposed to have held his court was, in the days of Giraldus Cambrensis, an imposing collection of ruins of former splendor: immense palaces, towers of great size, hot baths, temples, theatres, subterranean buildings, and aqueducts, all enclosed within fine walls. Here Arthur was said to have received Roman ambassadors, and here the archbishop gave up his honors to David of Menevia, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Merlin.² Both Wace and Layamon describe the traditional beauty and wealth of Caerleon in Arthur's day, and both tell of his coronation there.³ During the Welsh wars Monmouthshire was the scene of several important engagements. In the spring of 1265, while Mortimer was gathering an army at Wigmore, the earl of Gloucester was marshalling another in the forest of Dean, north of Caerleon. In the summer of the same year, after the rescue of Prince Edward by Mortimer and his joyful reception at Wigmore, Simon de Montfort retaliated by destroying the castle of Montmouth near Caerleon. The final campaign against Simon de Montfort was planned at Ludlow and in part fought out in the vicinity of Caerleon.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, *MLN*, XLIV, 513, 517.

² Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itinerarium et descriptio Kambriae* (ed. J. F. Dimock, Rolls Series, London: Longman, etc., 1868), pp. 55-56.

³ Wace, *Brut*, vs. 10461-10700; Layamon, *Brut*, vs. 24239-24730.

⁴ Thomas Wright, *The History of Ludlow and its Neighborhood* (London: Longman, 1852), pp. 175-177.

Mortimer was there from time to time, as a leader of the king's forces. In the year of the Kenilworth tournament, Edward I granted him ten bucks and two harts from the forest of Dean as a gift.¹

To the north-west, in the Mortimer lands of Brecon, lay the lake which Giraldus mentions as celebrated for its miracles and the mountains of which the chief was Cadair Arthur.² Westward from Caerleon, in the Mortimer lands of Carmarthenshire, was the town of Carmarthen, the traditional birthplace of Merlin.³ In the Mortimer lordship of Merioneth, near the village of Dyffryn, the inhabitants still point out a dolmen called Coetan Arthur, which the king was supposed to have hurled from the summit of Moelfre, on the north-east. At Cirencester, in Gloucestershire, where Mortimer arms are still visible in the church of St John,⁴ King Arthur, according to Wace, was supposed to have been crowned.⁵ At Builth, which was held by Mortimer until 1260, but taken in that year by Lewelin ap Gruffydd, was the tomb of Arthur's son, Amr,⁶ and a pile of stones of which one bore the footprint of Arthur's dog, Cabal, and possessed magic qualities.⁷ The castle of Builth was later the scene of the death of Lewelin ap Gruffydd, in 1282, at the hands of Edmund de Mortimer, Roger's son, and Edmund, duke of Lancaster. From the circumstances and events surrounding the tournament of Kenilworth, and the fact that Arthurian legend must have been familiar both to Roger de Mortimer and to the duke of Lancaster, associated as it was with places in which they fought together in the wars, the selection of the Round Table device for the tournament seems peculiarly appropriate.

About fifty years after Roger de Mortimer gave his Round Table entertainment at Kenilworth, his grandson, Roger, the first earl of March, imitated his action with a Round Table tournament at Bedford. The Wigmore genealogist is not our authority for the second Round Table; he possibly thought it added little to the credit of the family. Knighton, however, provides an account of it.⁸ The first earl of March seems to have inherited the worst characteristics of his forbears, and showed little wisdom in the years when his power in England was great. Having quarrelled with Edward II and formed a notorious alliance with Queen Isabella, he was influential in the dethroning of the king and in placing the young prince on the throne as Edward III. During the youth of the new sovereign, Mortimer virtually ruled England. His arrogance and extravagance were unlimited. Having rebuilt the castle of Ludlow at great expense, he entertained the queen mother and the young king magnificently. But his splendor was short-lived. Two years after the Round Table tournament at Bedford, he was tried for treason and hanged, his estates and the guardianship of his heirs being taken into the hands of the king.

¹ *Cal. Close Rolls, Edward I, 1272-1279*, p. 536.

² Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itin. et descrip.*, pp. 33-36.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴ S. A. Pitcher, 'Ancient Stained Glass in Gloucestershire Churches,' *Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Publications*, XLVII (1925), 304-306.

⁵ Wace, *Brut*, vv. 9245-9246.

⁶ Nennius, 'De mirabilibus Britanniae insulae,' *Eulogium Britanniae sive Historia Britonum* (*Monumenta historia Britannica*, I [ed. H. Petrie and J. Sharpe; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1848]), 80.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁸ *Chronicon Henrici Knighton* (ed. J. R. Lumby, Rolls Series, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1889-1895), I, 449.

The three Round Tables form a curious series in the history of the use of legend for political purposes. The first, held in 1279, by a powerful baron with ambitions for supremacy in Wales, at the seat of his close friend, Edmund, duke of Lancaster, appears to have been designed at least in part as a celebration of victories in the Welsh wars. The second, held by Edward I in 1284 at Nevin, gives evidence of a deliberate purpose on the part of the king to secure the prerogatives associated with Arthurian tradition for the royal family, and to make the crown of Arthur one of the royal possessions of England. The third Round Table, set up by Roger de Mortimer in 1328, at the height of his political ascendancy, seems to have been an extraordinarily foolish gesture.

One member of the family of Mortimer, who lived during the period of the three tournaments, bore a name associated with the romance of Tristan and Iseult. Although Iseult was probably a well-known name in the west,¹ Iseult de Mortimer, who died in 1340, was the only member of the family, so far as I can discover, who bore the name. The circumstances of her life justify a slight digression from the main story of the Mortimer use of legendary material. Edmund, eldest son of Roger de Mortimer, who set up the Round Table at Kenilworth, named his daughter Iseult several years before the Kenilworth entertainment. She inherited the manor of Upper Arley in Worcestershire, where Layamon had written the *Brut*, and she lived there until her death in 1340.² She possibly attended the Round Table tournament held by her cousin, Roger de Mortimer, at Bedford in 1328. At the time she lived, the romance from which she derived her name was well known. An incident from the story had appeared in the *Chevrefeuille* of Marie de France; the Anglo-Norman writer, Thomas, had written a great poem embodying the whole story; and the Norman-French Béroul had provided another version; all these before the end of the twelfth century. In Germany, Eilert von Oberg had written a version of it before the end of the century. In 1226 King Hakon of Norway had the poem of Thomas translated, and about that time or earlier, Gottfried von Strassbourg made the version of Thomas the basis of his famous redaction. In England, the romance was written into the Auchinleck Ms. during the lifetime of Iseult de Mortimer. During her lifetime, also, French artists were carving scenes from the story in ivory,³ and embroidering them on hangings.⁴ About the time of her birth, a beautiful tile floor was laid in Chertsey Abbey, in which the story, as told by the Anglo-Norman Thomas, was illustrated.⁵ The use of the Tristan legend in ivory carvings, hangings, and tiles, parallels the use of the Round Table device in courtly entertainment, and serves to show how closely romance material must have been bound up with the daily lives of the people who read romances.

The Mortimer genealogy in the Wigmore Ms., probably begun sometime after 1376, when John of Gaunt first proposed the settlement of the succession upon his heirs, shows a recognition of the importance of legendary ancestors and the

¹ Joseph Loth, *Contributions à L'Etude des Romans de la Table Ronde* (Paris: Champion, 1912), pp. 16-20. ² *Victoria History of the County of Worcester*, III, 6; IV, 230.

³ R. S. Loomis, *Illustrations of Medieval Romance on Tiles from Chertsey Abbey* (University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, II, No. 11; Urbana: Univ. of Ill., 1916), pp. 9-10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-19.

body of tradition which earlier kings had used to enhance their prestige. The first folio of the family genealogy bears an account of Edward the Confessor and relates facts concerning lands of his queen, Edith, which came to the Mortimers after the Conquest: Cleobury, Stoke Edith, and other manors.¹ The page is beautifully rubricated, as though with the purpose of drawing attention to the life of the sainted Edward the Confessor.² Below the account of Edward the Confessor, appears a list of the Norman knights who came to England with William the Conqueror, and were therefore the associates of the founder of the Mortimer family in England. At the opening where the pedigree of Gwladusa, princess of Wales, is shown, there is the same careful rubrication and illumination, to draw attention to another important feature of the family history. Gwladusa is shown to be descended from Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus, and in another line, from William the Conqueror, and Rollo, duke of Normandy.³

Preceding the family genealogy, the line of Saxon and Norman kings is carefully traced. At fol. 29^v and fol. 30^r two beautifully written and well-designed pages set off the relationship of Edward the Confessor to the preceding kings, showing the place of Canute, Harold, Godwin, and Harold, son of Godwin. There follows a full account of William the Conqueror, and the genealogy of the Norman kings to Richard II.

Introducing the royal genealogy and the Mortimer genealogy is a *Brut*, or chronicle of Britain, a conventional Latin redaction of pseudo-historical material, resembling other *Bruts* from Geoffrey to the sixteenth century, and beginning with an account of Britain and the giants who inhabited it before the coming of Brutus. The story of the settlement of Britain is followed by an account of the origin of various peoples and languages, a description of Scotland, and a list of the Scottish kings, with a note on the marriage of Loth of Scotland to the sister of King Arthur, and the two sons of that marriage, Gawain and Modred.⁴ Next comes an account of Cornwall and Wales, which is completed by a list of the princes of North and South Wales, the final entry being the name of Lewelin ap Ierwerth, prince of North Wales, the Mortimer ancestor. A note has been added in the lower right hand corner of the page, below the name, recording the marriage of Gwladusa to Ralph de Mortimer, the wars against the Welsh, and the end of Welsh independence in 1282.⁵ Brief accounts of the Saxon kingdoms follow, with lists of kings and notes on their reigns. At fol. 21^v an insertion of three leaves serves to connect the reigns of Lud and Bryhtricus. Two full folios of it are devoted to the reign of Cadwalader. It was evidently prepared with some haste, for the rubrication and handwriting are careless and of a different type from that of the rest of the manuscript. The hand is, however, of the same period as the fourteenth-century hands of the manuscript. It seems evident that in the preparation of the royal genealogy, the discovery that Cadwalader had not been sufficiently emphasized led to the preparation and insertion of these three leaves. The Wigmore Ms. *Brut* and genealogies of the early kings, though resembling

¹ Cf. *Victoria History of the County of Shropshire* (ed. William Page; London: Constable, 1908), I, 289. Cf. also Eyton, IV, 140-141, 193-228.

² Fol. 48^r.

³ Fols 51^r-52^r.

⁴ Fols 10^r-11^r.

⁵ Fols 11^r-13^r.

various chronicles and *Bruts*, bear no strong resemblance, so far as I can discover, to any one of them. The accounts of kings and kingdoms are apparently redactions of conventional material, compressed and made as brief as possible, except for the three great heroes: Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus.

It is evident that the writers of the *Brut* and the royal genealogy of the Wigmore Ms. were interested in preparing useful material to serve as an introduction to the Mortimer genealogy. They wished to make clear the nobility of the lineage of the earls of March, and at the same time to show that if Roger de Mortimer were to come to the throne, he would be, by direct line of descent, king of England, Scotland, and Wales. As a large land-owner in Ireland, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he may also have hoped to add that territory as well to the Empire of Britain, and thus prove himself an Arthur or a Cadwalader returned to unite the kingdom.

We have some evidence that the earls of March understood the problems of England in the fourteenth century; they may have felt themselves in a position to solve them. The loss of continental possessions had made the English increasingly aware of their nationality. The task of an English king was patently to unite England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, under a government that all could recognize as their own. In 1398, Roger de Mortimer, as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, donned native costume and adopted native horse-trappings in the effort to convince the people under his rule that he was one of them.¹ He seems to have had a following in Ireland; and he was immensely popular in Wales. Adam of Usk describes vividly the welcome accorded him at the Parliament of Shrewsbury in 1398, when twenty thousand English and Welsh turned out to greet him, dressed in his colors, red and white.² The Mortimer lands in Wales and Ireland were sufficient to enable the earl of March to assume the dignity of empire, should the occasion present itself. For a century the Mortimers had been aware of the possibility of using Arthurian legend to good advantage in elaborate chivalric entertainment. The careful preparation of a genealogy to show their descent from Brutus, Arthur, and Cadwalader, indicates that they recognized the possibilities inherent in this noble ancestry.

It appears, then, that the Wigmore Ms. occupies an important place in the history of the use of legendary material to support royal claims. In the twelfth century Arthur and the prophecies of Merlin added prestige to the Norman kings who needed the reflected glory of a noble predecessor, equal and, if possible, superior to Charlemagne. When the Welsh princes, asserting their descent from Arthur, became troublesome, Henry II attempted to make less of the glory of Arthur, but the legend was too strong to be set aside. The Mortimer tournament at Kenilworth, by a clever use of Arthurian material for the purpose of enhancing courtly entertainment, probably suggested to Edward I that the glory of Arthur might well be associated with the royal family of England. This he sought to accomplish at his Round Table of Nevin, after the destruction of all the Welsh

¹ Fol. 59v.

² *Chronicon Adae de Usk* (ed. Sir Edmund Maunde Thompson, London: H. Froude, 1904), pp. 18-19, 164-165.

princes had ended their hope of the restoration of a native prince. In the fourteenth century, when the earls of March came close to inheriting the crown, they possessed a genealogy making clear their descent from Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus. Later, it was precisely this use of the three ancestors which gave Henry VII his opportunity to declare that in the house of Tudor the ancient line of British kings was restored. The Tudors were also well aware of the value of the panoply of Arthurian story in their public appearances, and took every opportunity to employ devices from legend and romance to heighten the effect of their courtly pageantry.

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